

TORNADO PREPAREDNESS

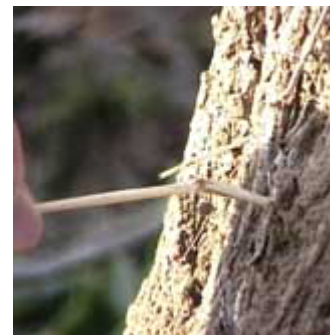


Tornado season lasts from March thru June, but tornadoes can occur at anytime of the year. Tornadoes usually occur from 3 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Each year about a thousand tornadoes touch down in the US. Only a small percentage actually strike occupied buildings, but every year a number of people are killed or injured. The chances that a tornado will strike a building that you are in are very small, however, and you can greatly reduce the chance of injury by doing a few simple things.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent being injured in a tornado is to be **ALERT** to the onset of severe weather. Most deaths and injuries happen to people who are unaware and uninformed. Young children or the mentally challenged may not recognize a dangerous situation. The ill, elderly, or invalid may not be able to reach shelter in time. Those who ignore the weather because of indifference or overconfidence may not perceive the danger. Stay aware, and you will stay alive!

If you don't regularly watch or listen to the weather report, but strange clouds start moving in and the weather begins to look stormy, turn to the local radio or television station to get the weather forecast.



Straw Imbedded in Tree
from Tornado.

Check *The Weather Channel* for additional information, or if you have trouble getting up-to-the-minute forecasts on a regular radio, then a "NOAA weather radio" is a wise investment.

Tornado Watches and Warnings

A **Tornado Watch** is issued by the National Weather Service when tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. This is time to remind family members where the safest places within your home are located, and listen to the radio or television for further developments.

A **Tornado Warning** is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.

Tornado Warning Signs

Here are some of the things that people describe when they tell about a tornado experience:

- A sickly greenish or greenish black color to the sky.
- If there is a watch or warning posted, then the fall of hail should be considered as a real danger sign. Hail can be common in some areas, however, and usually has no tornadic activity along with it.
- A strange quiet that occurs within or shortly after the thunderstorm.
- Clouds moving by very fast, especially in a rotating pattern or converging toward one area of the sky.
- A sound a little like a waterfall or rushing air at first, but turning into a roar as it comes closer. The sound of a tornado has been likened to that of both railroad trains and jets.
- Debris dropping from the sky.
- An obvious "funnel-shaped" cloud that is rotating, or debris such as branches or leaves being pulled upwards, even if no funnel cloud is visible.



If you see a tornado and it is not moving to the right or to the left relative to trees or power poles in the distance, ***it may be moving towards you!*** Remember that although tornadoes usually move from southwest to northeast, they also move towards the east, the southeast, the north, and even northwest.

Avoid Tornado Myths

Do **NOT** open your windows if a tornado threatens. This does ***NOTHING*** to protect you and may lead to injury from shattered glass.

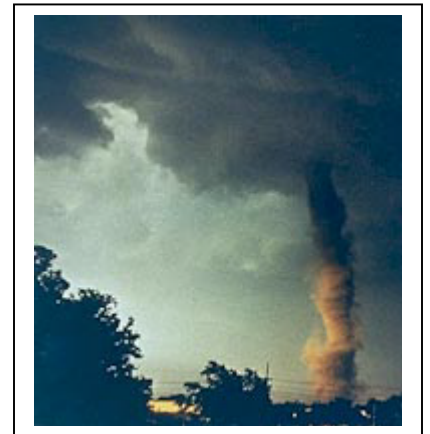
Do **NOT** go to the southwest corner of your home. Research clearly shows that the safest place is a small interior room in your home.

Do **NOT** use a highway overpass as a storm shelter. Meteorologists and emergency preparedness experts strongly agree that overpasses are among the worst places to go when a tornado is bearing down. For more on this subject, check out the following *USA Today* article:

<http://www.usatoday.com/weather/resources/basics/tornado-underpass.htm>

The following safety rules can help protect you during a tornado:

- In a home or small building, go to the basement or an interior room on the lowest level, (i.e. closet or bathroom). If possible, get under something sturdy and cover your head.
- In a high-rise building, go to a small, windowless room in the interior of the building.
- In schools, nursing homes, hospitals, factories, and shopping centers, go to the pre-designated shelter area.
- In a mobile home or car, **IMMEDIATELY LEAVE AND GO TO A SUBSTANTIAL STRUCTURE.**
- If outside and unable to find shelter, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and cover your head with your hands.



Emergency Preparedness

The Red Cross suggests that you assemble a "disaster supplies kit" that you keep in your shelter area. It should, at a minimum, contain:

- A first aid kit with essential medication in addition to the usual items.
- A battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Canned and other non-perishable food and a hand operated can opener.
- Bottled water.
- Sturdy shoes and work gloves.
- Written instructions on how to turn off your homes utilities.

More Info

Here're several web sites that can provide you with more info and facts regarding tornados:

<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/>

<http://www.ocs.ou.edu/tornadosafety/>

Remember, Safety is Cool!



Let's Be Careful Out There!